



*Always Ready
Always There*

The Gem State Guardian

The official newsletter of the
Idaho National Guard

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(BOISE)—The Idaho Army National Guard's 116th Cavalry Brigade Combat Team held a change of command ceremony Saturday, March 5, at Gowen Field.

The ceremony recognized the brigade's accomplishments achieved under the command of Col. Russel D. Johnson, who led the unit from Feb. 1, 2014 to March 5, 2016.

As the unit bid farewell to Johnson, the ceremony also recognized the confidence Idaho Army National Guard leaders have in the unit's incoming commander, Col. Farin D. Schwartz.

Both commanders have served in many positions throughout the brigade and have deployed in support of 116th combat operations overseas.

Under Johnson's command, the unit achieved many successes. Most notable was the brigade's outstanding performance during its rotation to the National Training Center in the summer of 2015. Johnson led the joint, multi-component team, totaling more than 4,500 personnel and representing 23 states, through the first Army National Guard brigade combat team-led exercise of its kind in over a decade. Of the nearly 4,500 personnel, more than 2,500 belonged to the Idaho Army and Air National Guards.



Members of the 116th Cavalry Brigade Combat Team stand in formation at the position of parade rest during the unit's change of command ceremony held March 5, 2016 at Gowen Field in Boise. The ceremony recognized the brigade's accomplishments achieved under the command of Col. Russel D. Johnson, who led the unit from Feb. 1, 2014 to March 5, 2016.

In the spring of 2014, Johnson also led the brigade to Cambodia where U.S. military personnel and Royal Cambodian Armed Forces participated in a major bi-lateral humanitarian aid and disaster response exercise.

Johnson, now a resident of Nampa, spent his early military years in the North Dakota Army National Guard. His service in Idaho began in 1989 when he was assigned to a unit in Post Falls. Johnson served two tours of duty in Iraq and served in various leadership positions prior to serving as the brigade commander. He leaves this command to serve as the director of operations for the Idaho Army National Guard.

Schwartz, who served most recently as the commander of the Idaho Army National Guard's Installation Support Unit, now assumes the responsibility of commanding more than 3,000 Soldiers that make up the brigade--an organization which spans 26 communities throughout Idaho, and currently includes units in Montana and Oregon.

During the ceremony, Johnson was presented with the Legion of Merit for exceptionally meritorious service as the commander of the 116th Cavalry Brigade Combat Team.

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Idaho Assistant Adjutant General - Army Brig. Gen. John Goodale, left, outgoing 116th Brigade Commander Col. Russel D. Johnson and incoming 116th Brigade Commander Col. Farin D. Schwartz stand at attention during the 116th Cavalry Brigade Combat Team's change of command ceremony held March 5, 2016 at Gowen Field in Boise. As the unit bid farewell to Johnson, the ceremony also recognized the confidence Idaho Army National Guard leaders have in Schwartz, the unit's incoming commander. Both commanders have served in many positions throughout the brigade and have deployed in support of 116th combat operations overseas.

"Colonel Johnson's dedication to mission, Soldiers, families, and employers was instrumental in the overwhelming success of the brigade during his tenure," the citations reads, signed by Lt. Gen. Timothy Kadavy, director of the Army National Guard. "Colonel Johnson's exemplary leadership is in keeping with the finest traditions of military service and reflects great credit upon himself, the Idaho Army National Guard and the United States Army."

In attendance of the event were many distinguished visitors. Rep. Van T. Burtenshaw of Idaho's 35th District and Emmett Mayor, Honorable Gordon W. Petrie joined many military leaders in observing the event.

Brig. Gen. Michael Hanifan, commander of the Nevada Army National Guard and Brig. Gen. Zachary Doser, director of the Nevada National Guard's joint staff were also in attendance.

Guard leadership from other states, which provide units to the 116th, included Assistant Army Adjutant General Brig. Gen. Steven Beach of the Oregon National Guard and Assistant Army Adjutant General Brig. Gen. Robert Sparing of the Montana National Guard.

The ceremony was held in accordance with military traditions dating back to revolutionary war, including the symbolic passing of the brigade colors and a large troop formation representing the major units that comprise of the 116th. The Idaho Army National Guard's 25th Army Band was also on hand to play the Army Song and other traditional military music throughout the event.

The 116th Cavalry Brigade Combat Team currently consists of two combined arms battalions, a cavalry squadron, a field artillery battalion, a special troops battalion and a brigade support battalion.

The 116th, like all Idaho National Guard units, maintains readiness to carry out its two critical missions: to respond to state and local emergencies and to fight and win our nation's wars.

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